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## Twenty-First Century Moonlighters

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## Twenty-First Century Moonlighters

### Abstract

#### [Excerpt]

In May 2001, 7.8 million persons worked multiple jobs in the United States, a figure representing 5.7 percent of all workers. Why did these persons choose to work more than one job? To answer this question, the May 2001 Current Population Survey (CPS) asked multiple jobholders: "What is the MAIN reason you worked at more than one job?" Respondents were asked to choose among the following response options: Meet expenses or pay off debt, earn extra money, build a business or get experience in a different job, enjoy the second job, or some other reason.

Results from the May 2001 supplement reveal that more than 1 in 3 moonlighters worked multiple jobs in order to earn extra money, a category that could include saving for the future or getting extra money to buy something special. An additional 27.8 percent moonlighted in order to meet expenses or pay off debt. Among the other common reasons for working multiple jobs, enjoyment of the second job was reported by 17.4 percent of moonlighters, and 4.6 percent wanted to build a business or get experience in a different job.

### Keywords

multiple jobs, employment, Current Population Survey, reason, cause

### Comments

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# Issues in Labor Statistics



U.S. Department of Labor  
Bureau of Labor Statistics  
Summary 02-07 September 2002

## Twenty-first century moonlighters

In May 2001, 7.8 million persons worked multiple jobs in the United States, a figure representing 5.7 percent of all workers. Why did these persons choose to work more than one job? To answer this question, the May 2001 Current Population Survey (CPS) asked multiple jobholders: "What is the MAIN reason you worked at more than one job?" Respondents were asked to choose among the following response options: Meet expenses or pay off debt, earn extra money, build a business or get experience in a different job, enjoy the second job, or some other reason.

Results from the May 2001 supplement reveal that more than 1 in 3 moonlighters worked multiple jobs in order to earn extra money, a category that could include saving for the future or getting extra money to buy something special. An additional 27.8 percent moonlighted in order to meet expenses or pay off debt. Among the other common reasons for working multiple jobs, enjoyment of the second job was reported by 17.4 percent of moonlighters, and 4.6 percent wanted to build a business or get experience in a different job. (See table and chart.)

As mentioned above, multiple jobholders gave various reasons for their decision to trade in nonwork time for an additional job. These reasons varied depending on demographic characteristics. For example, young workers (aged 16 to 24) were much more likely to work more than one job in order to earn extra money (51.8 percent) than were persons aged 25 and older (32.6 percent). It stands to reason that younger workers, many of whom are not yet fully responsible for their own basic support, are likely to view their job(s) as providing "extra" money. The share of adults working multiple jobs in order to build a business or get experience in a different job, while relatively small to begin with, tended to decrease with age. Conversely, the share of workers who moonlighted because they enjoyed the second job tended to increase with age. For example, only 9.3 percent of young workers (aged 16 to 24) reported that they worked multiple jobs because they enjoyed the work on the second job, compared with 27.0 percent of older workers (aged 55 and older).

Hispanic moonlighters were about equally divided between working more than one job in order to meet expenses or pay off debt (40.9 percent) and wanting to earn extra money (38.3 percent). Among black multiple jobholders, nearly half reported that they held more than one job to earn extra money, with an additional one-third responding that they needed to meet expenses or pay off debt. Nearly 1 in 5 whites worked multiple jobs because they enjoyed the second job, more than double the share of blacks, and 7 percentage points higher than that of Hispanics. Nonetheless, more than 1 in 4 whites moonlighted in order to meet expenses or pay off debt.

Meeting expenses or paying off debt was the primary reason why widowed, divorced, or separated persons held more than one job, with 39.9 percent citing these reasons, compared with 24.3 percent of married (spouse present) multiple jobholders. Conversely, a greater share of married persons (20.4 percent) than of widowed, divorced, or separated persons (13.7 percent) worked multiple jobs because they enjoyed the work on the second job. Single (never married) persons were more likely to moonlight in order to earn extra money (43.0 percent) than were married multiple jobholders (32.4 percent).

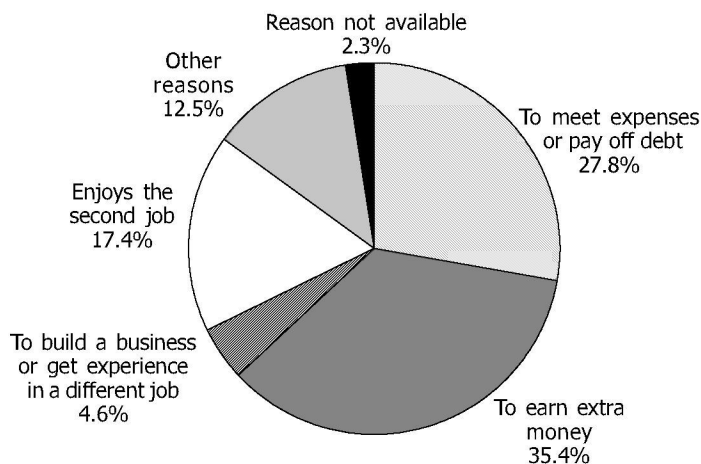
Reasons for holding more than one job also

varied among persons with different work schedules. For example, among those who worked two full-time jobs, 39.3 percent did so to meet expenses or pay off debt; this compares with 27.1 percent of persons with other schedules, such as those working full time on the primary job and part time on the secondary job. Among those who held two part-time jobs, 8.5 percent did so to build a business or get experience in a different job, more than double the share of moonlighters with other work schedules. Enjoyment of the second job was the reason given by 21.5 percent of persons for whom the hours varied on at least one job, about 5 percentage points higher than for workers with other schedules.

The overall number of multiple jobholders has declined since the last CPS study on main reason for multiple jobholding was conducted in May 1997. The percentage of workers reporting holding more than one job in order to meet expenses or pay off debt also declined; however, it is difficult to determine how much of this was due to changes made in the question design.<sup>1</sup>

For additional information on reasons for multiple jobholding, contact Jennifer L. Hallmartel, Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statis-

Reasons for working more than one job, May 2001



tics, Washington, DC 20212. Telephone: (202) 691-6378. E-mail address: [Hallmartel\\_J@bls.gov](mailto:Hallmartel_J@bls.gov). Information in this report will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: 1-800-877-8339. This material is in the public domain and, with appropriate credit, may be reproduced without permission. ■

<sup>1</sup> In May 2001, the CPS question asked, "What is the MAIN reason you worked at more than one job?" The interviewer would then read the following list, from which the respondent could choose one: (1) meet expenses or pay off debt, (2) earn extra money, (3) build a business or get experience in a different job, (4) enjoy the second job, (5) some other reason. The same question was asked in May 1997; however, the interviewer would not read the response options. In-

stead, the interviewer would code responses into the most appropriate of the following categories: (1) to meet regular household expenses, (2) to pay off debts, (3) to save for the future, (4) to get experience in a different occupation or to build a business, (5) to help out a friend or relative, (6) to get extra money to buy something special, (7) enjoys the work on the second job, (8) changed jobs during the week, (9) other (specify).

**Multiple jobholders by age, race, Hispanic origin, sex, marital status, work schedule, and reason for working more than one job, May 2001**

Selected characteristics	Percent distribution by reason					Selected characteristics	Percent distribution by reason				
	To meet ex-penses or pay off debt	To earn extra money	To build a business or get experience in a different job	Enjoys the second job	Other reasons		To meet ex-penses or pay off debt	To earn extra money	To build a business or get experience in a different job	Enjoys the second job	Other reasons
<b>Age and sex</b>						<b>Race and Hispanic origin</b>					
Total, 16 years and older .....	27.8	35.4	4.6	17.4	12.5	White .....	27.1	33.7	5.1	18.6	13.1
16 to 24 years .....	23.0	51.8	7.3	9.3	7.3	Black .....	32.8	47.4	2.2	8.2	7.3
25 to 34 years .....	30.1	35.5	5.2	13.8	11.4	Hispanic .....	40.9	38.3	3.4	11.3	5.4
35 to 44 years .....	29.9	34.1	4.1	17.5	12.5	<b>Marital status</b>					
45 to 54 years .....	26.1	30.9	3.7	21.0	15.5	Single .....	27.2	43.0	6.5	13.2	7.3
55 years and older .....	26.9	26.5	3.1	27.0	14.7	Married, spouse present .....	24.3	32.4	4.2	20.4	16.3
Men, 16 years and older .....	26.6	35.7	4.2	17.6	14.0	Other marital status <sup>1</sup> .....	39.9	33.5	3.2	13.7	7.6
16 to 24 years .....	25.2	50.2	6.2	9.8	8.3	Women who maintain families .....	47.7	30.7	4.8	9.5	5.4
25 to 34 years .....	27.8	37.3	5.1	14.6	11.4	Men who maintain families .....	40.7	33.9	4.7	13.3	4.2
35 to 44 years .....	29.0	35.1	2.6	17.1	14.8	<b>Work schedules</b>					
45 to 54 years .....	24.4	31.5	4.7	22.1	15.6	Primary job full time, secondary job part time .....	29.5	36.1	3.0	17.6	11.8
55 years and older .....	23.8	26.9	3.1	24.0	20.2	Primary job full time, secondary job full time .....	39.3	36.2	3.6	9.3	10.8
Women, 16 years and older .....	29.0	35.0	5.1	17.1	10.8	Primary job part time, secondary job part time .....	23.7	36.3	8.5	14.7	13.7
16 to 24 years .....	21.2	53.1	8.3	8.9	6.4	Hours vary on primary or secondary job .....	24.4	33.2	4.8	21.5	13.4
25 to 34 years .....	32.8	33.4	5.4	12.8	11.5						
35 to 44 years .....	30.9	33.1	5.7	18.0	10.0						
45 to 54 years .....	28.1	30.2	2.6	19.6	15.3						
55 years and older .....	30.5	26.1	3.0	30.5	8.3						

<sup>1</sup> Includes persons widowed, divorced, and separated.

NOTE: Data on the number of multiple jobholders differ from the regularly published monthly data because of differences in the estimation procedures used to produce the data. Detail will not sum to 100 percent because cases in which reasons for multiple jobholding were not available are not presented. Detail for race and Hispanic-origin groups will not sum to totals because data for the "other races" group are not presented and Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups.

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